

# IMPRESSIONS & REFL3CTIONS 5

**RCC/MIT Associate Campus Partnership Program**

Outcome from a Tour of the MIT Media Lab and Dinner at the Stella Room

October 30, 2013

By:

Program Participants from Roxbury Community College (RCC)

Edited by:

José A. Alicea, Ed. D.

February 10, 2013



## IMPRESSIONS & REFL3CTIONS 5

### RCC/MIT Associate Campus Partnership Program

The following short writings by students, faculty and staff members from Roxbury Community College (RCC) result from a tour of the MIT Media Lab and dinner at the MIT Stella Room on October 30, 2013 as part of the RCC/MIT Associate Campus Partnership Program, administered by MIT's Special Program in Urban and Regional Studies (SPURS), sponsored by the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program.

#### Mission:

To collaborate in a partnership program to benefit students, faculty, Fellows and scholars of RCC and MIT within the context of the city/regional planning disciplines.

#### Goals:

1. To expose RCC students to the international/global perspective within their RCC academic major through meaningful interactions with the SPURS/International Fellows.
  - RCC's students gain insight into the work of the Fellows by participating in key lectures, field trips, and social engagements that would support their academic and career pursuits at RCC.
2. To expose the Fellows to RCC students and to their diverse experiences as American, immigrant and international students within the American higher education system.
  - The Fellows participate in key classroom activities as guest speakers, offer college-wide lectures, as well as provide mentorship in RCC projects related to their field of study and professional expertise. The Fellows can utilize RCC students and faculty as resources when exploring themes related to American planning.
3. To engender a collaborative educational environment that bridges the gap between community colleges and undergraduate/graduate institutions.



## IMPRESSIONS & REFL3CTIONS 5

### Guest Writer

Eric Moskowitz,  
*The Boston Globe Magazine*

### Contributing Writers – RCC Students

Lloyd Bryan, Jr  
Shaoyu Chang  
Joseph Chevalier  
Amy Curran  
Chadress Desrosiers  
Alain D. Eugene  
Waller P. Finnagan III  
Bethlehem Ghidey  
Marquise Hart  
Shelby Lindsey-Vaughn  
Florise Luc  
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### Contributing Writers – RCC Faculty and Staff

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**DUSP** = MIT's Department of Urban Studies and Planning

**SPURS** = DUSP's Special Program in Urban and Regional Studies

## 24 HOURS IN KENDALL SQUARE

10:27 A.M.

### MIT MEDIA LAB

Beyond what could be the most crowded bike rack I've ever seen, I find myself in front of the fabled MIT Media Lab. There are 26 research groups in this complex – which like a product of a Steve Jobs fever dream – each one centered on an innovative faculty member or senior research scientist and a handful of enterprising grad students.... (T)he lab isn't open to the public. Turns out there's a downside to being considered a world class-temple of innovation: people can't help but wander in off the street. And sometimes they steal stuff – valuable, top-secret, mesmerizing stuff.

10:52 A.M.

### SOMEWHERE IN THE MEDIA LAB

The lab spaces, which deliberately bleed into one another to encourage collaboration, are passing by in a blur of Technicolor high tech. Near a display of cereal boxes and smart phone price scanners, I get to play with the I/O Brush, a beefy paintbrush equipped with camera and sensors. It lets children brush items in real life – an Elmo doll, say – and then apply their colors, patterns, and textures to a digital canvas.

While I try not to break anything, (our guide) points out a screen that can be used for controlling a computer with gestures that grew out of its creator's advisory work on the movie *Minority Report*. Next to it, I see what looks like a foosball table left in the hands of Dr. Frankenstein, reengineered and encircled by wires and lights.

Down the hall, we come upon a plush teddy bear concealing a sophisticated robot. Nurses have tested it for therapy and data collection. Want to tell whether a kid has fever? Just ask her to hug the bear (It's called a *Huggable*, of course).

We reach the lab of...the composer of the robot opera *Death and the Powers* and an invention whose technology-assisted instruments have been used by Yo-Yo Ma, Peter Gabriel, and Prince. A grad student is putting the final stitches on a side project: a denim skirt with a huge built-in iPod speaker.

Two doors down...another grad student is cramming for an afternoon presentation to National Science Foundation grant writers. The Calgary native is as animated talking about the everyday miracles in his Kendall world as in his own work (on 3-D printing), right down to the dorm washing machine that texts him when his load is done. "In Canada, it's completely different in terms of technology being integrated around us," (he) says. Somerville, too," I tell him.

Excerpt from  
 24 HOURS IN KENDALL SQUARE  
 by Eric Moskowitz  
*Boston Globe Magazine*, Feb.26, 2012

## Contributing Writers – RCC Students



### **Lloyd Bryan, Jr.**

When I attended the MIT "Shrimp Dinner," my immediate response was, "Man, what I have to do to get here next summer?" Between the fellows, the programs, the professors and the relationships that members of RCC and MIT respectively are trying to expand, I can only show my gratitude for the invitation they extended to me personally. Also, a special thank you is due to Prof. Foote; without him this opportunity would've completely passed me by.

### **Shaoyu Chang**

RCC/MIT Impressions and REflections

November 20, 2013

After moving to Boston almost one year ago, I came to the realization that living in Boston as a student is wonderful for access to world-class experts and researchers. I was especially impressed by the RCC/MIT SPURS Collaboration & Dinner event at MIT that I attended last month.

When I signed up for this event, I expected an ordinary tour on the MIT campus. However, it turned out to be an extraordinary experience. Not only did we take a look inside the Media Lab, but we listened to graduate students and researchers presenting their recent projects. We had the opportunity to ask questions, and the presenters carefully answered our questions with clarity and sincerity. During group sessions, we were even able to interact with international scholars face-to-face. We were treated not just as students, but as competent intellectuals.



As an international student, I appreciate the opportunity to have first-hand experience with one of the top institutions worldwide. And I realize that this kind of collaboration –between a community college and a top-tier higher education institution—is extremely rare. Therefore I am grateful for all faculty members and scholars who made this happen. I hope it will continue to inspire more RCC students in the future.

Thank you

**Joseph Chevalier**  
MIT Impressions

Great opportunity to visit a world class institution, and get a chance to peek behind the curtains. To have shared that experience with the MIT fellows and the MIT faculty, you can't help but get excited about the future. Also, very lucky to have guidance from the Roxbury Community College faculty who make it their personal mission to expose as many students as possible to something that most people don't get to experience.

Roxbury Community college was supposed to be a quick stop in my academic career. When I made the decision to leave Worcester State University, my plan was to transfer to the University of Massachusetts-Boston. I was advised to head over to RCC for one semester so my transfer could run smoothly.

I did not know how much of a hidden gem Roxbury Community College really was, and the impact this school may have on my future. I was pleasantly surprised to have met selfless professors who dedicate their time to make sure that students have a chance to experience the MIT fellowship program. In my opinion, this partnership between RCC and MIT is a once in a life time experience that gives specific insight and exposes you to global culture and politics that normally would be reserved for others, not urban students at an inner-city community college. I was amazed and grateful to have had the chance to sit, meet and talk to an array of professionals from around the world. Through the MIT fellows' presentation, I was able to grasp and get enhanced knowledge of global conflicts. It humanizes international events and policies, while broadening my global outlook.

The Urban Economics class was an amazing class. For the final project, I was able to combine my class project, which was on Youth development, and my outside project; it incentivized me to do some much needed research. Through my research, I was able to get much needed information on the economics-side of creating a Youth development program, and some of the obstacles that may arise economically that may impact the Youth program.

I am very lucky and satisfied with the direction my academic career has taken. I hope to keep in contact with the professors and use their energy, contacts, and knowledge to help build a bridge that may better serve these surrounding communities.  
Thank you for the experience.



## Amy Curran

It was a leap of faith that led me to enroll in Professor Foote's Political Science class. My journey after high school was a stormy one. Following a loss that left me reeling, I found myself on a path of self-destruction. Having been stripped of everything, including my self-esteem, I ended up broken and homeless. On the rebound from this experience, I became dedicated to helping others who may have battled similar prejudice and social injustice, which plagued my life at that time. My openness in sharing this aspect of my life stems from the appreciation I feel for being included and welcome in such an amazing collaboration. I feel extremely grateful for the ingenuity of the dedicated staff involved and their realization of the importance of shared knowledge and understanding between RCC and MIT students.

On the first day of class this fall, Professor Foote explained that we would have the opportunity to listen to "Fellows" from MIT who were in the States, dedicated to improving their respective countries. Students from all over the world came to give presentations to our class. We were able to learn about Kenya, Angola, El Salvador, Argentina, Pakistan, Turkey, Bahrain, Korea and China. What I learned from the collaboration with these students will stick with me forever. I was especially drawn to a student from Angola who spoke about the devastating Corruption in her country leading to unbearable poverty and injustice. Her plan to help the people in her country was inspirational. After her presentation, she was happy to give me her contact information so that we could speak in depth about her struggles.

I met with this student the following week at MIT and I decided to do my research paper on her country. Her encouragement was comforting; however, after the meeting, I realized that she was more interested in talking about my life than she was her own. Surprisingly, we had much in common. I began to realize how important these relationships with the "Fellows" could be. Being invited to MIT for a dinner to discuss and celebrate the collaboration between the two schools was an honor. The campus was unreal to me. A sense of innovation seemed to permeate around me and I kept looking around for one of those flying bubble cars from *The Jetsons*. It was intimidating at first to be walking around such a renowned institution. I felt quite less than, until we actually got to listen to some presentations from some of these amazing students. It was obvious from their creations and ideas to change the world that these students were brilliant. What stuck out to me most however, was their integrity and willingness to let us into their worlds.



The dinner was delicious; however I was so excited to hear what the speakers were saying, I can't quite remember what was served. The best part of the evening for me was when we were separated into small groups and were given a question to discuss. I was at my table with some of the fellows and faculty and we each got a chance to share our feelings on the issue. At that table and during that discussion, I began to realize what was most important: The condition of the human heart, occurred to me, to be the commonality between us. The love for humanity and positive change brought us together. Although from very different worlds, we learned that the greatest thing we had to share was our experience.

I am grateful for Professor Foote and the passion he exudes for what he teaches. His encouragement and role in this program has provided me with both knowledge and the inspiration to move forward with a dream. To be involved in such an amazing experience is humbling, and I hope to continue to have additional opportunities and experiences through this collaboration.

However, about 20 years out of school, I have to say that I was more than a little intimidated. As we studied political and economic factors in other countries, we were told that Fellows from MIT and from these countries would be presenting in our classroom. Having the opportunity to collaborate with MIT students, Fellows and Faculty has inspired something in me I never knew I had.

Professor Foote brought the Fellows in to speak to our class on many occasions. I felt humbled being able to listen to the Fellows from MIT talk about their countries and their goals; however, coming from quite different backgrounds, I began to feel like RCC students have something to offer MIT as well. I came to realize that the desire to make a positive change in the world was the common thread that wove us together -- the desire to make a positive change in the world.



### **Chadress Desrosiers**

Urban Economics

December 19, 2013

Reflection Paper Summary

This semester in Urban Economics, I learned a great deal about the communities and how people and their surrounding area are affected by a number of factors. I have been living in a society in which I knew hardly nothing about. After taking this course, I can identify local government, government policies, economic growth and more about this field. Even though my career goal



may not specifically be in community development, no matter what profession I decide to engage in, I will have to deal with the community. This was my first time taking a course and using an online application to post work; and it has prepared me for future classes in which professors may also use this method. At first, I thought it would be an inconvenience, but this is the best way to ensure that the work gets from the student to the professor.



My favorite part of the course was visiting UMASS and M.I.T. This experience opened my eyes to the many goals I have, which I can actually connect together. The students and faculty at M.I.T have given me inspiration in order to make positive contributions to my community and the world. Knowing that people are as invested in others as I am, makes me continue on to my goal with a strong mindset. I am now moving on to UMASS myself and have networked with faculty there in order to get the best experience for my field. I thank you so much Professor Latif and your colleagues for expanding our potential here at Roxbury Community College. This is the best way for me to leave this school and I will always want to be a part of positive change here at RCC in the future.

### **Alain D. Eugene**

MIT field-trip

The MIT field-trip was interesting for me; the new technologies that they use are incredible. Their desire to research things that we deal with everyday was very cool. As a community college student, I liked the idea of friendship or partnership between MIT and RCC. I also liked the way we get together regardless of our level of education; we were on the same page and we had the same critical thinking on each subject. I had a lot of fun at MIT and I'm looking toward to coming back.

Thank you!!

### **Waller P. Finnagan III**

#### **MIT to RCC:**

You have so much to offer- untapped talent, unlimited potential.  
What can we do together?

#### **RCC to MIT:**

You have so much to gain- unlimited resources, boundless imagination.  
We can do anything.

**Bethlehem Ghidey**

November 21, 2013

MIT Reflection

While at MIT, I was very impressed with advancements occurring within the school. In a world that fears global warming and its effects, MIT had conducted experiments that are trying to find ways to conserve energy. One of the experiments that stood out for me is the tracking of people's trash. Many people do not know where their trash is going, once the garbage truck comes and takes it away. Therefore, tracking devices were put on several types of trash to observe the use of energy to get the trash to its final destination. What I found surprising was that similar pieces of trash had different types of transportation even though they were going to the same place. The efficiency of one route over another is unclear; however, I still found the process very impressive.

In the fast past society that we live in one does not think about the things that occur in our lives regularly. Even though it is something as small as trash, it is still a necessary part of daily living. So I ask: Do you know where your trash is going?

**Marquise Hart**

Urban Economics

Reflection

Throughout the course, we have covered a wide range of topics and spoken a lot about helping and changing our community. We have spoken about transportation and its policies; how they can be changed. We talked about health care and how some are receiving it and others not; how the state is making strides to improve it and is doing a decent job. We have also spoken about life issues in general, and how we go through it; what local government does for us and the help we all receive or lack thereof. All of these topics hit home; all of these topics affect our community; the issues of urban development, how it is great progress; but sometimes it is a cruel ploy to remove lower income citizens from their homes. These have been very enlightening for me personally, hearing the experiences of others, hearing from the people who have been at the bottom and had to scrape and fight tooth and nail just to get to where they are; and they still haven't fully reached where they want to be.

I have gotten a lot of helpful information and made a few connections as well for the future; all these factors will help me greatly in the long run. As far as the presentations go, hearing from all the M.I.T speakers was actually very insightful for me; most of them were from another country and I found it fascinating to hear the outside perspective of the U.S. I am also fortunate to have learned about important matters other countries deal with, like Russia and Germany, when it comes to housing; Bhutan, when it comes to balancing happiness in the country and staying current with the rest of the world, while at the same time, preserving their culture; and countries like Brazil, when it comes to congestion and building your city to fit a certain transit system. All of these experiences and knowledge from this Urban Economics class will stay with me, without a doubt.

The final and probably best experience for me was the M.I.T visit to listen to the work the SPURS program is doing. The partnership seems very genuine and so do all the people involved. I felt like the people at M.I.T honestly want us to come there after RCC and be the best we can. I personally enjoyed their Media Lab. Being a techno geek myself, I felt like a kid in a candy store with a sweet tooth. I swear that if I ever get accepted into M.I.T, that lab will be my second home. I just might move in and build a room myself.

Overall, this entire class was an amazing experience for me and I assume for other people in my class. It has inspired me to reach for new heights and exceed my expectations; and I am determined to do just that. I highly recommend this class to anyone who wants to take it. I assure them that they will enjoy it, especially if Professor Latif is teaching it.



### **Shelby Lindsey-Vaughn**

November 29, 2013

#### **My Impression**

I found the dinner at MIT to be informative and inspiring, not only because I was in a building surrounded by innovators and their ideas, but because it gave me an opportunity to hear the unique perspectives and visions of people of different generations coming together in hope of combining their philosophies in a productive way. The forum allowed me to get a small glimpse of what I hope the newly developed Community Development and Urban Planning program will look like in the future from the Associate level even to the Masters.



When I came into the dinner at first, I thought those attending would just be talked at instead of being in dialogue with those who invited us and those who were guest speakers, like forums I was used to participating in prior; but that was not the impression I got at MIT. I believe it was well organized and a constructive way to gather a group of people with common interests/goals in one room to figure out how we can practically apply these ideas out in our communities that will benefit them.

### Florise Luc

Life is all about connections, personal connections, business connections and Internet connections, just to name a few. The connection between MIT and RCC has contributed to my educational experience as well as personal growth. By interning at MIT during the summer of 2013, I learned the importance of having alliances. It is my hope that the relationship and bond between both schools continues to develop stronger.



### Christian Sandoval

I truly enjoyed attending the MIT dinner; I actually enjoyed it so much that this is my second year in a row coming to the dinner. I found the Media Lab very interesting; the projects they were working on were mind-blowing; and it's also very exciting to know that the projects they are working on will one day be used in the homes. Also, as a student studying to become an engineer, being in the Media Lab gave me more of an inspiration to study harder and hopefully one day to be given the chance to work alongside such amazing people with so much talent in the technology field.



## Contributing Writers – RCC Faculty and Staff

**José A. Alicea, Ed. D.**

Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

Director, RCC/MIT Associate Campus Partnership Program

In past iterations of *Impressions & REfl3ctions*, I've written mostly about the RCC/MIT partnership program and its development: What should we do? What components to include? And I've pushed for a real augmentation to the educational experience of our students. The WOW! Effect after the MIT visit still exhilarates me; RCC students seem to see real possibilities that truly challenge their ways of thinking and allows them to dream big.

I've also written about the superb food and the variety on the menu, akin to a food critic. However, this visit was different: I had to deal with a medical emergency: One of my students looked awful at the dinner table; Tara (not her real name) turned purple and orange. She looked at me with startled eyes. What happened? "I'm allergic to eggs and didn't know that the noodles were egg noodles." Her blurred gaze told me to act quickly; I transformed into a combat medic—my persona for nearly twenty-years— triage, security, control of the space and enlistment of support, while engaging the patient. The team that I immediately formed included MIT personnel and RCC faculty; I barked out staccato orders: Call 911, overruled by in-house procedure. Call MIT security. "EMT on the way." MIT's Blue and Black on bike in the elevator and on the way. Triage, analyze, stabilize and transport —AMBULATORY MEDEVAC!

We need an RCC faculty or staff member to go with Tara. Nasreen would you please accompany Tara and stay in communication with me through cell? "Yes I'll go." "Patient in transit to local hospital."

Hello Tara how are you? "I'm feeling fine. That was really scary. I'll be back in school tomorrow; right now, I'll rest. Thank you for all the caring. I was in good hands. Thanks for checking on me."

A grand learning experience for all! Tara will definitely be more careful eating American foods (in her country noodles have no eggs). A great learning opportunity for all—MIT and RCC will ask about food allergies and label all foods at future events. Now for the internal report. I'll consult with Nurse Ruth to document the event to see where we can improve our reaction. Deep breath...expect everything even the unexpected. I guess the food was good for most of us.

Plan next semester's events: Stopping I-95. Hey Ofer—contact Tunney Lee and—should we call Chuck Turner? Slow down; you move too fast; institutions just don't change as fast. We design, create, integrate and build lower structures, envisioning upper structures. Randall you move just as fast as Ofer; hold your horses. Design and write Community Development 101, edit, draft, meet, edit, argue, delete, expand, draft, negotiate...submit. Nasreen, you have another project to include? "Yes." Yet another responsibility? How much time and energy do you have? Let's meet; let's form this; let's institutionalize it, so it can sustain and last beyond us and our personal ties to DUSP, Bish, Nimfa and Ofer (MIT Partnership faculty and staff members).



“Our students are worth it! I do it for them. If one RCC student dreams bigger, sees greater possibilities, engages in community building and civic participation, I’m happy.” Well said Randall. “Look at this letter from Woody; this is why I do it.” Frame it; it beats any diploma or certificate on anybody’s wall.

Meditation and Yoga in the Latif Garden? I’m in!

**Randy Foote**

Professor of Political Science

Impressions and Reflections: MIT Fall 2013



This is a remarkable program. I could say a lot about the details and the vision and what we have done these past three years, but let me rather cut to the heart of the matter: our students.

After the dinner I rode back to RCC on the bus with two of my students: One a Haitian immigrant who wants to gain skills to take back to Haiti; the other a woman who had been homeless and has now gotten her life together and wants to give back to her community. They are the kind of students who make teaching so rewarding. Both of them were in awe of what they had seen at MIT, but even more in awe of the doors they saw opening ahead of them. They saw a world before them that they had never imagined to be within their reach. They could take seminars at MIT, take an RCC course with MIT faculty, utilize the facilities, intern in the MSRP, perhaps go on to do graduate work at DUSP. They could not stop talking about how excited they were. Most of all, they both saw the opportunity to learn skills that they could take back to their communities...in Roxbury and in Haiti. They see the possibility of following the path from RCC to UMass to MIT DUSP...and they believe that it is actually possible. But whatever paths they take, they have had doors opened in their minds and hearts that will not be shut. Horizons broadened. Unimagined possibilities entertained.

Both of these students have been working on research papers for my political science class, and they have connected with SPURS Fellows who spoke in my class...the Fellows have mentored them in their work, and have become friends. What was so clear throughout the evening (and since) is that there is no real separation between our community college students and the Fellows...they share the same passions and concerns; they teach each other and they share their experiences. Our students have much to learn, but the desire is there, and that is what matters.

This program can open doors. Our students have the passion to make the most of this opportunity. We have so much yet to do.

My thanks to all.....MIT, RCC and our students.....



## Nasreen Latif

Professor of Social Science and Management

RCC-MIT Collaboration Continues: Year Three  
(Includes MIT Media Lab, Senseable City Lab tour and presentation with dinner and activity).

The projects and presentations by MIT researchers were exciting. I would like to have more time to spend with those researchers and their projects. Can we spend a day or a few hours in those labs to have a long lasting experience and/or impact our work as a faculty/student at RCC?

In my Urban Economics and Economics classes, my MIT trip participants shared their experience with their classmates. That was a really rewarding experience for them - our energy and effort well spent for organizing this trip. The International Fellows' and RCC students' excitement always motivates me to do more with this collaboration and beyond.

Spending quality time with our new President and Vice President with my students in a relaxed environment was a big treat for me! Unfortunately, I had to leave the MIT campus before our group activity to accompany one of our students to a local hospital; she had an allergic reaction. Thanks to our host for handling this incident efficiently. Next time, we will let our host know if we have anyone in our party allergic to certain foods.



In the near future, I would like to observe MIT faculty and researchers in action to see the process and the environment, so that I can work on similar projects and ideas in my class at RCC with our students for our community.

**I am happy and proud to be a member of the collaboration design team!**

## Nancy Teel, Ph. D.

Dean of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies  
Memorable Night

Our late-day visit to MIT met and exceeded all my expectations. Our visit to the Media Lab was truly fascinating. I so appreciated the young researchers who took time out to demonstrate their work to us. The talks over and after dinner engaged all the participants. I especially liked the long-term perspective evidenced in the planning of the MIT/SPURS program. I also enjoyed the small group discussion very much. And after the meeting concluded, the Red Sox won the World Series—how could one ask for more?





